

SENATOR EARLINE ROGERS



Addressing the rising cost of prescription drugs

State programs help keep medications available to Hoosiers with low and fixed incomes

According to a recent study, approximately one out of three Americans under the age of 65 were without health insurance for all or part of 2002 and 2003. Even more Americans live without prescription drug coverage because their health insurance does not include drug coverage from their private or public benefit programs.

AARP predicts that the rising trend in pricing will continue to concern and threaten the health of American consumers as these prices outpace inflation, a fact particularly troubling for those on modest and fixed incomes.

Serving the uninsured

During the past legislative session, I supported the passage of House Enrolled Act 1251 to create a Regional Drug Repository Program. Now underway, this program organizes the collection and redistribution of unused prescription drugs to nonprofit health clinics serving the uninsured, indigent, or underinsured. Pharmacies, health care clinics, and other facilities serve as

**1 out of 3
Americans under
65 were without
health insurance**

(Continued on page 2)

Dear Friends,

The latest statistics indicate that more than 43 million people are uninsured in the United States, and the cost and availability of quality healthcare is a growing concern for every American.

Living without health insurance is not just a symptom of unemployment. Working families, small business owners, and temporary employees suffer as well, with 80% of those uninsured living in a family with at least one family member employed full- or part-time.

In Indiana, an estimated 687,700 Hoosiers, or nearly 13% of the state's population, are uninsured. Health care costs to Hoosier companies have risen 10% from 2003.

I am very concerned that many Hoosiers do not receive the quality healthcare they need and deserve to maintain healthy and productive life styles and families.

As the General Assembly prepares for the 2005 legislative session, I encourage you to contact me or a member of my staff by calling toll-free 1-800-382-9467 ext. 2-9491 with any concerns you have regarding the rising cost of healthcare or other issues of importance to you. Together, I believe we can find the solutions to these problems and make a difference.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Earline Rogers

RESIDENCE
3636 West 15th Avenue
Gary, IN 46404-1828
219-949-7578

STATE HOUSE
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2785
800-382-9467

ONLINE
S3@IN.gov
www.IN.gov/S3

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 3
INCLUDING GARY, HOBART, MERRILLVILLE, AND LAKE STATION

(Continued from page 1)

repositories, accepting drug donations from health care providers, hospices, and hospitals. The donated prescription drugs are then available at a low or no cost to health clinic patients under a physician's order. The program will provide a relief in prescription drug costs to state and federal programs that serve low income patients while increasing the availability of prescription drugs to those in need.

Expanded discounts for Hoosier seniors

HoosierRx is Indiana's Prescription Drug Program for low-income seniors that provides discounts on prescription drugs for eligible seniors. Recent changes to the federal Medicare drug discount program have prompted changes in the state's HoosierRx program.



When using their HoosierRx Drug Card, enrollees will now receive a 75% discount off the cost of prescriptions. The new maximum benefit for current HoosierRx enrollees has been increased from \$1,000 to \$1,200. New enrollees will also receive 75% off the cost of prescriptions, but maximum benefits will be based on when they apply.

If a senior is already enrolled in the HoosierRx program, it is in their best interest to also sign up for a Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card because it offers a larger discount. The HoosierRx Card can provide important supplemental assistance to seniors after they reach the maximum benefit of their Medicare-Approved Drug Card.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

HoosierRx

1-866-267-4679
www.in.gov/HoosierRx

Medicare

1-800-633-4227
www.medicare.gov

Early Learning and School Readiness Commission begins its work

The Early Learning and School Readiness Commission has begun its work to ensure that all Hoosier children receive the early educational experiences needed to succeed in school.

In May, Governor Kernan acted on a recommendation from Indiana's Education Roundtable and established the commission by executive order. The order instructed the commission to assess the current

resources available to children from birth to age six and to implement successful early learning and school readiness strategies.

"I applaud the work that the commission is doing," stated Rogers. "Ensuring that children are prepared for school is one way of closing the achievement gap."

In order to evaluate the state's current resources, Lieutenant Governor Kathy Davis' office has taken the lead in assessing all state services offered to children. The commission is also reviewing how other states assess local resources available in individual communities—both public and private. With this information, the commission will identify services currently provided and what populations are benefiting.

Additionally, the commission has divided its early education reform priorities into three separate categories:

- Pre-K – Kindergarten;
- Professional Development and Reading; and
- Collaborative Partnerships and Parents.

During its July 27th meeting, the commission developed its top three goals for Pre-K – Kindergarten:

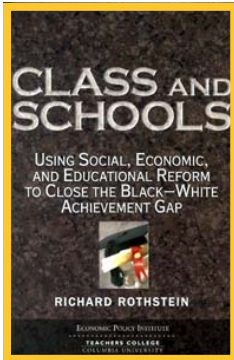
- Supporting full-day Kindergarten for all children;
- Improving the quality and coordination of early education services including child care (home and center-based), preschool, and family support programs; and
- Ensuring every child has access to high quality school-preparatory services.

The commission will develop the top three goals in each of the other areas during the next two meetings.

The panel is charged with issuing an initial report to the Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction by December 31, 2004.

School reform alone will not close the achievement gap

In recent years the black-white achievement gap has received a lot of attention. Believing that race nor household income should dictate the future of children, policymakers have strived to ensure that all schools provide all children with a quality education.



While school reforms are necessary, improving our schools alone will not fill the gap. The achievement gap stems from a combination of complex social phenomena that our school systems can combat in part only.

A recent publication *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* by Richard Rothstein and co-published

by Columbia University analyzes recent social studies that demonstrate several societal causes of the gap.

Studies referenced in the book make several potent findings:

- Persistent racial discrimination in the labor market, which historically has led to a lifetime of reduced average earnings for black workers, can lead black students to expect less of a payoff for academic effort, thereby lessening their incentive for academic achievement.
- Achievement gaps between white and black students of the same income level exist in part because, on average, black families with low incomes are likely to have been poor longer than white families with similar incomes.
- Minority children are disproportionately affected by high mobility – having to move a lot because of unemployment or housing quality. Frequently switching classes and teachers makes learning more difficult not only for students who move but for stable students in schools that have high mobility rates. A government

survey found that 30% of the nation's poorest children attended at least three different schools by the third grade; for middle-class students the figure was only 10%. Black children were twice as likely as whites to move this much.

- The push by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* to rely mostly on standardized tests to measure academic success can be ineffective in creating and measuring progress. These tests can give inaccurate or misleading information about performance and do not measure non-academic skills, like perseverance or self-discipline, which students equally need for school and job success.

The influence of a child's health care, nutrition, parents, home, and community on student achievement is enormous. In fact, schools can use the best practices, have highly trained and competent teachers, and have the highest academic standards; *still* they would be unable to completely combat negative influences outside school. Schools alone cannot be expected to right broad societal problems.



In addressing the achievement gap, Indiana policymakers should look for solutions to the problems students face outside of school as well. I look forward to working with my colleagues to widen our scope to see how societal differences influence the gap and develop policy to combat those differences.

How will Hoosier students pay for college?

The CollegeChoice 529 Investment Plan is a qualified tuition program that offers an exceptional opportunity to save and invest for the future college expenses of any Indiana child.

Indiana residents can enroll in the age-based investment option by calling 866-400-7526, or logging on to www.collegechoiceplan.com.

- ⇒ 60% of students have to borrow money to pay for their undergraduate degree
- ⇒ \$15,375 is the average student debt upon graduating from a four-year public university
- ⇒ 43,766 participants were in the CollegeChoice Plan as of May 2004



State Senator Earline Rogers

200 West Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204-2785

Toll-free: 1-800-382-9467

E-mail: S3@IN.gov

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
INDIANAPOLIS, IN
PERMIT NO 8644

STAY INFORMED!

Sign up for my email newsletter on various state issues important to our community. Visit my website for more information.

www.in.gov/s3

Lake County property taxes: Keeping taxpayers in their homes

Although there are still many uncertainties with Lake County property taxes, I am pleased with the efforts that state and local officials have made to ensure that citizens can afford to remain in their homes.

In June, the Lake County Council approved a payment plan for taxpayer's whose 2002 taxes had increased by \$1,200. This allows those hardest hit by the reassessment to spread their payment obligations over six months.

Additionally, Governor Kernan's 2 percent circuit breaker would limit 2002 property taxes to 2 percent of a home's assessed value. Homeowners

who paid more could get a refund check for 2002 taxes or receive a credit against 2003 taxes, which are payable this year. Although I recognize that the burden of repaying the \$15.3 million loan from the state is still in debate, I am hopeful that our local officials will find a fair compromise.

I applaud these efforts to ensure that our neighborhoods are stable and Hoosiers are able to stay in their homes. As your State Senator, I will continue to monitor the Lake County situation and advocate for reform to ensure the property tax burden is fairly distributed.